

GOV. MSG. NO. 555

Howard A Lesser

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts Degree, Psychology
University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

04/01/2009 to present Hawaii Disability Rights Center
Senior Advocate

- State Administrator for Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) program
- Staff member for Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- Federally mandated Representative for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – exempt from term limits
- Quarterly meetings in collaboration with of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), and Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS).
- Assigned cases for all agency programs, including individuals who are blind, as well as individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired
- Supervised by staff attorneys
- Investigates incidents of abuse and neglect
- Conducts outreach for all programs
- Submits testimony as approved by Executive Director
- Writes Annual Program Performance Reports
- Established close working relationship with Ho'opono, Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
- November 2015: Co-presented WIOA with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to Department of Education (DOE), including transition teachers, DOH-DDD, DHS, DOL, and non-profit agencies.
- November 2013: Participated in Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Conference

10/27/2008 - 03/31/2009 Hawaii Disability Rights Center
Interim Co-Executive Director

- Served as Board Chair and members
- Completed and submitted Interim Agency Organizational Chart

- Completed Job Performance Reviews for HDRC staff
- Assisted with PAIR and CAP annual Program Performance Reports
- Assisted with PABSS Annual Narrative
- Assisted with WIPA quarterly and annual reports
- Completed Staff Work Plans for Fiscal Year
- Participated in weekly Intake meetings
- Planned, coordinated, and implemented new staff training
- November 17, 2019: Participated in TASC NDRN CAP Training

10/16/2000 to present Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Case Advocate IV

- Provided both individual and systems advocacy representation for all of the agency's programs serving persons with disabilities within the agency's federal mandates.
- Monitored and investigated state, public and private non-profit agencies for reported rights violations.
- Conducted aggressive outreach statewide.
- Provided rights orientation training throughout the state.
- Represented clients at Social Security, Medicaid, Department of Education, Department of Health, and Vocational Rehabilitation hearings.
- Completed certification and Federal background check for the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program.
- Met or exceeded annual job performance reviews.
- Provided orientation and training for new staff.

01/01/1991 - 10/15/2000 Hawaii Centers for Independent Living

Deputy Director

- Assisted in the overall administration and supervision of statewide personnel and programs.
- Responsible for day-to-day program operations.
- Developed, implemented and analyzed agency policies and procedures.
- Compliance monitoring and quality management.
- Conducted Peer Reviews in Pago Pago, American Samoa and Sparks, Nevada, Centers for Independent Living with Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- Analysis and reporting of statistical data.
- Program development
- Participated in Department of Education Individualized Education Plans and Department of Human Services and Social Security Administration appeals hearings.
- Responsible for writing the agency's quarterly and annual program performance reports to all funding sources.
- Preparation of annual program budgets.
- Fundraising by organize events and campaigns to raise money and other kinds of donations for the organization
- Legislative liaison

- Organized 400 letters of support for the Chore Services program to maintain funding at State Legislature.
- Public relations
- Participated in various advisory boards, task forces, coalitions and councils on behalf of the agency.

12/1989 - 12/1990 Goodwill Industries of Honolulu, Inc.

Director of Rehabilitation

- Provided direction for all programs within the department, including the development and maintenance of their goals, standards, procedures and methodologies.
- Responsible for ensuring that all rehabilitation programs were in total compliance with all accrediting, certifying and monitoring bodies.
- Guided and directed staff in implementing programs working with program participants in accordance with program guidelines.
- Provided opportunities for staff to participate in training related to current technological practices.
- Revised the agency's policies and procedures manual.
- Conducted departmental meetings.
- Assured that all stipulations of the agency's purchase of service contracts were met.
- Developed and obtained funding for new programs in conjunction with the agency's strategic plan.
- Administered the agency's program evaluation system.
- Promoted and marketed the agency's programs to the community.
- Served as legislative liaison.
- Developed the Home and Community Based Services program for the agency.

01/1987 - 12/1989 Protection and Advocacy Agency of Hawaii, Inc.

Case Advocate

- Provided both individual and case advocacy representation for individuals with developmentally disabilities, mental illness, dual diagnoses, or clients under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within the agency's Federal mandate.
- Responsible for writing the agency's quarterly and annual program performance reports under the Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Act (PAIMI).
- Monitored and investigated state, public and private non-profit agencies for reported rights violations
- Responsible for writing Federal grant applications.
- Assisted in the development of the Human Rights Committee at Hawaii State Hospital.
- Provided rights orientation training throughout the state.
- Staffed and coordinated agency's Advisory Council meetings and assisted with annual goals and objectives.
- Represented clients at Social Security, Medicaid, Department of Education, Department of Health, and Vocational Rehabilitation hearings.

- Served as guardian ad litem for guardianship and civil commitment cases in Civil and Family Court.
- Served as agency liaison and chaired the Handicapped Network coordinating and conducting weekly meetings during the legislative session for the purpose of reviewing, writing and testifying on disability related issues.

04/1986 - 01/1987 Hawaii State Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities
Program-Specialist IV

- Provided support and assistance to the Council's Statewide Master Plan.
- Assisted in the development of supported employment programs in existing pre-vocational and sheltered workshop programs.
- Analyzed and researched programs serving individuals who are developmentally disabled.
- Staffed both Project Review and Evaluation Committee and Employment Development Committee; coordinated meetings for foregoing committees.
- Wrote annual report.
- Served as Legislative liaison.
- Council Representative to Rehabilitation Facilities of Hawaii.
- Conducted study of liability insurance affordability for non-profit organizations.
- Disseminated information on county, state and federal grants to pertinent non-profit organizations.
- Provided technical assistance to parents and professionals.
- Participated in conferences concerning individuals who are developmentally disabled.
- Promoted community integration of individuals who are developmentally disabled.

07/1983 - 04/1986 Autistic Vocational Education Center
Executive Director

- Responsible for overall supervision and participation in the coordination of agency program staff.
- Responsible for evaluation and updating of the program's goals and objectives.
- Actively sought funding through grants, charitable trusts and foundations, private donations and fundraising activities.
- Conducted and supervised assessments, baseline data, and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Prepared narrative and fiscal progress reports to agency board and support agencies.
- Provided education to community to understand autism and showcase achievements accomplished through agency program training.
- Wrote newsletters to parents/agencies to inform them about agency program activities.
- Served as agency liaison to the State Legislature.
- Acted as substitute for all direct service staff positions when necessary.
- Served as agency representative for various committees, task forces, advisory boards, coalitions and councils.

09/1981 - 07/1983 Autistic Vocational Education Center

- Counselor/Teacher
- Developed community-based work sites for program clients
- Developed and implemented the first Supported Employment program in the State of Hawaii for program clients.
- Worked with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Plan in implementing Individualized Work Related Plan for applicable clients.

04/1979 - 09/1981 Autistic Vocational Education Center

Teacher Assistant

- Assisted teachers with daily instruction and activities.
- Developed Individualized Education Plans for clients
- Developed positive, non-physical behavioral intervention strategies for clients.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Current Member of Palolo Lions Club (approximately 25 years) involved in community activities, served as President and Zone Chair in 2018
- Current Member of Hawaii Association of the Blind
- Current Trustee of Hawaii Association of the Blind Foundation
- Current Member of Advocacy Committee, Hawaii Diabetes Association, Hawaii Chapter
- Current Member of Children's Coordinating Council, Ko'olauloa
- National Member of Transition Committee
- Volunteer of National Kidney Foundation, Honolulu, Hawaii
- 2002-2004: Board Vice President of Hawaii Centers for Independent Living
- 2000-2004: Chair of Hawaii State Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, (Appointed by Governors Cayetano)
- 1996-2000: Chair of Hawaii State Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, (Appointed by Governor Waihee)
- 1996-2004: Board member of Honolulu Community Action Program
- 1997-2000: Board Member of Hawaii Disability Rights Center
- 2000: Trustee of Hawaii Lions Foundation
- 1998-2001: Board Member of Hale Kuha'o, Independent Living Housing